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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: WASIT BADR ORG. DEPUTY ON THE SADRIST CHALLENGE

CLASSIFIED BY: Alfred Fonteneau, RC, REO Al Hillah, Department
of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b)

1.(S) SUMMARY. In a January 22 meeting with Regional Embassy
Office staff, Wasit Badr Organization Deputy Qasim al-Aerajay
indicated that he continues to see the followers of Moqtada
al-Sadr as a growing threat to the primacy of his organization
and the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
(SCIRI) in Wasit. Al-Aerajay was extremely pleased at the
official announcement of the December election results and
confident that the Wasit contingent of the United Iraqi
Alliance/555 slate would be responsive to the requests of SCIRI
and Badr leadership in the province. However, as provincial
elections approach, he predicted increased tension with Sadrists
in the province, as he felt Wasit Sadrists insufficiently
support the goal of a nine-province "super-region" across all of
South Central and Southern Iraq. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) Al-Aerajay, the Deputy Chairman of the Badr Organization
in Wasit, pronounced himself extremely pleased with the official
announcement of the December election results, in which the
UIA/555 slate took seven of eight seats allotted to the
province. When asked how, exactly, SCIRI and Badr Org. decided
on the candidates to stand for election, Al-Aerajay said that
formal SCIRI or Badr Organization party affiliation was less
important, rather, "that they were loyal and would do what we
wanted."

SADRIST CHALLENGE TO SCIRI/BADR DOMINANCE

3. (S) The Sadrist presence, in Al-Aerajay's opinion, continues
to strengthen throughout the province and become more visible
and better organized. He pointed to the establishment of a
large Sadrist office in the town of Badra, the increasingly
militant attitude of Sadrist provincial council members, and
"many" more armed Sadrist militiamen in public areas.

4. (S) Al-Aerajay also related a recent conversation he had with
the Wasit Iraqi Police Chief Hussein Abid al-Hadi Mohammed
Mahbooda (aka Abo Ali Al-Wasity), a "former" Badr Organization
commander. Wasity believes, according to Al-Aerajay, that at
least thirty percent of his police force are outright Sadrists.

5. (S) Going beyond the threat of violent clashes between
Sadrists and Badr organization followers, Al-Aerajay said he
views organized Sadrists as a threat to the SCIRI/Badr
domination of political life in the province. He predicted an
extremely strong showing for Sadrist candidates in eventual
provincial and local elections. Nearly as important, Al-Aerajay
asserted, was the potential ability of Sadrists, in Wasit
province and across South Central Iraq, to hinder the formation
of federal entities, in particular the creation of a
nine-province "super-region" covering all of South Central and
Southern Iraq. Without this region, Al-Aerajay believes, the
diverse Shia groupings would continually argue about resource

distribution and power, leaving them susceptible to challenges from Iraq's other ethnic groups.

¶6. (S) COMMENT. Al-Aerajay, as a high-ranking Badr Organization official, is clearly not an impartial judge of the Sadrist presence in the province. However, his views are an accurate indicator of the perceptions of Badr Organization and SCIRI leadership in the region. Tension between his organization and Sadrists in the province has on occasion led to violence and unrest across the entire South Central region. He clearly believes a better-organized Sadrist presence is a threat to SCIRI/Badr power. What remains unclear, at this point, is what he intends to do about it. END COMMENT.

FONTENEAU